

Amendments to the Specification:

Please amend the Abstract as presented in the prior PCT application and insert the Abstract following the claims of the specification. A clean version of the amended Abstract provided on a separate sheet is also attached.

~~The present invention relates to the field of fluid sampling, in particular, the invention relates to aspirating fluid samples from a plurality of closed containers such as Vacutainers™ or vials containing biological fluid. In one embodiment the present invention provides a A fluid sampling probe may be provided 20 in a unitary assembly for aspirating fluid samples by way of a reduced diameter piercing portion 2a-in direct fluid communication with a reservoir 1-for (temporarily) storing and/or transporting a sample, comprisingincluding: a first portion 2a-for piercing a closed fluid carrier, a second portion 1-serving as a reservoir for receiving a fluid, the second portion 1-being formed integrally operative with the first portion 2a-and a third portion 3 providing fluid communication between the first and second portion.~~

~~—The fluid sampling probe 20 of the present invention, without being a limiting example, may be used to provide a high throughput aliquotting system for handling precise quantities of material. Accordingly, the division of a sample of a substance into equal parts (equal or otherwise), each of which representing a known quantitative relationship to each other and to the sample as a whole is enabled on a large scale.~~

Page 1, after the title of the invention, please delete the entire section entitled Related Applications and insert the following new section therefor:

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This is application is a U.S. National Phase Application under 35 U.S.C. § 371 of International Application No. PCT/AU2004/000838 filed June 25, 2004, which was published Under PCT Article 21(2), which claims priority to Australian Provisional Patent Application No. 2003903254, filed June 27, 2003, the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by reference.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 2, line 20, with the following amended paragraph:

US Patent No 6,010,463 (Lauks et al) discloses a device and method for collecting a fluid sample and introducing it into a sensing device for real time analysis. This device is intended to sample blood directly from a patient or a closed tube with the intent of coupling or passing the blood directly to a disposable sensing device-(i-stat). Lauks discloses a device adapted for use with a conventional Vacutainer™-type blood collection system. These conventional blood collection systems consists of a housing, a first needle cannular adapted for insertion into a patient and a second needle cannular at the opposite end of the housing adapted for penetration into an evacuated container for collection of the blood sample. A device of Lauks, in one embodiment thereof, consists of a reservoir adapted for connection to the conventional sampling system via a resealable penetrable stopper. At the other end thereof is a puncturable seal fixed on an inside ledge of a closure cap leading to a capillary tube fitted in a capillary tube holder that penetrates the puncturable seal thereby allowing sampled blood to flow into the capillary tube. Lauks is a complex device which is directed to a manual system for taking small samples of blood and applying these samples to a small disposable test cartridge. Lauks does not address the problems associated with efficient and high volume handling of fluid samples in an automated system.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 3, line 22, with the following amended paragraph:

Preferably, the second portion comprises a disposable moulded reservoir having a capacity sufficient for containing at least one sample volume of fluid. It is also preferable that the first portion comprises the piercing head of a relatively small diameter hypodermic needle. The needle gauge of the hypodermic needle is preferably in the range of 12-20 AWG and may come in a range of lengths. In this embodiment, the third portion comprises the shaft of the hypodermic needle. The disposable reservoir may be joined to the third portion by UV activated adhesive such that the probe forms a disposable combination for single use. Preferably, the

second portion comprises a disposable moulded reservoir of one of a plurality of sizes and shapes to accommodate a range of sample volumes.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 6, line 9, with the following amended paragraph:

In accordance with embodiments of the present invention, a reservoir integral to the piercing needle provides advantages over complex related art mechanisms, which do not facilitate a sample volume carrying portion. Embodiments of the present invention enable a fluid sampling system to hold a volume of fluid with the envelope of a disposable piercing tip. It is desirable, with this functionality at hand, to be able to pick up disposable tips in the form of probes according to embodiments of the invention, pierce and aspirate from closed containers and carry the sampled fluid around dispensing possibly to a number of locations, within a laboratory or laboratory instrument for example, from the sample fluid reservoir. There are a number of applications for the present invention in industry. One example, without being a limiting example, is the enablement by use of the invention of a high throughput aliquotting system for handling precise quantities of material. Accordingly, the division of a sample of a substance into equal parts (equal or otherwise), each of which representing a known quantitative relationship to each other and to the sample as a whole is enabled on a large scale.

Please replace the paragraph beginning at page 12, line 19, with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 6 shows an alternate mechanical arrangement to the first embodiment of the present invention of a fluid sampling probe. The alternate sampling probe 70 similar to that shown in Figure 1 comprises a moulded fluid receiving region in the form of a reservoir 1. The probe 70 may be in the form of a range of reservoirs of different volumes with a hypodermic needle 2 attached to the reservoir 1. The fluid reservoir 1 may accommodate a volume of fluid and the needle head 2a may penetrate a bung/cap of a closed fluid carrier (not shown) to the depth required. Again the preferred form of fluid carrier for which this embodiment of probe 70 has application may be a Vacutainer™. The small diameter needle head 2a requires minimal force to pierce the bung/cap. The assembly 70 may be disposable for dedicated use on each

sample contained in a fluid carrier. Generally, the assembly 70 incorporates a metal needle 2 for piercing and a moulded reservoir 1 to contain the sample volume. In this alternate arrangement or additional feature of the probe, a Luer type fitting 2c shown integrally moulded at the end of the reservoir portion 1 is a preferred means to make a secure mechanical connection between the fluid sampling probe 70 and a fluid sampling system. The preferred Luer connection 2c provides a screw type mechanical attachment and seal by a twisting and engaging motion facilitated by the flanges 2d of the fitting. Alternatively, an attachment and seal may be achieved by a threaded arrangement as would be understood by the person skilled in the art. Other methods of attachment could be envisaged by those skilled in the art such as a bayonet fitting or a cam interlock mechanism. Furthermore, the Luer fitting and means of attachment and connection of the probe to a fluid sampling system may be applied to a sampling probe as described in relation to the one piece moulded tip according to the second embodiment as shown in figures 2a and 2b. For example, the Luer fitting may be integrally moulded (not shown) in the probe of figure 2a or 2b at the end, which accommodates the fluid receiving region 1.